

To Whom It May Concern:

May 2005

I'm not really sure where to begin so I guess I will start at the beginning. This is a story that I feel compelled to tell because as a parent of three daughters if I can prevent someone from enduring what my girls and I have been through in the last six months, then my story will not be for not.

Both of my girls (twins) are very athletic, and have played sports since I can remember and they wanted to play competitively one of their favorite sports...basketball. The first couple of years we played YBOA and qualified for National level play by winning our state qualifier in our age group. We went to the Nationals for the next two years and for the most part enjoyed the experience and the competitive play. After our last YBOA team dissolved we joined an AAU team and played at our age level once again. At the end of our AAU season and winning our state tournament, we found that not everyone was wanting to go to Nationals and compete at that level. We were disappointed to say the least. Word of us not representing Maine at the Nationals spread and my girls were approached by a gentlemen by the name of Michael "Woody" Woodbury who at the time was coaching a 15U team and who had won the National qualifier in his age group but didn't have enough interest from some and not really enough players to field a team to compete at the national tournament. He approached my girls and asked them if they would be interested in playing "up" a year with his team for a few tournaments and then possibly accompanying them to the National Tournament. This was not the first time that Mr. Woodbury had approached the girls about playing for him, in years past he tried to recruit them every year but we opted to other things as his reputation preceded him but because of their disappointment at the time I agreed to let them play in a couple of tournaments and even though I had heard and seen firsthand that this particular coach had a rather aggressive style, my girls seemed to be okay with it so we continued on. For the first 6 months or so, playing for this team was a fairly good experience, there were a few bumps in the road along the way, but nothing that other teams didn't go through from time to time. Coach Woodbury seemed to positively motivate his players and even though his style was not something that I totally agreed with, my girls wanted to play for this team because of **the quality of players they would be playing with**. There were numerous 1st and 2nd team All Conference players, including my own girls, and they were looking forward to playing with some of the best. I also want to mention at this time, that both of my girls were starters on Mr. Woodbury's team from the very beginning so this is not about a lack of playing time, getting even for something that he did or didn't do, or vengeance etc., it's about doing the right thing. The last 6

months of our time on this team is what has prompted me to share about this information about this coach.

First of all Mr. Woodbury seems to feel that he is above everyone and that whatever it is that he so chooses to do, say, or take action regarding, is the way it's going to be. There is little or no room for compromise and he says he answers to no one. He is disliked by many in the basketball community here, mostly because of his style and coaching antics on the court during the games (he has a tendency to lose control and at times I am not sure that he even realizes where he is). He seems to thrive on negative attention that he creates for himself and or his players. His interaction with parents was minimal at the start of the new Fall season as he had gone head to head with a parent and things were said and done that affected the team so from that point on he preferred to interact with the girls individually and they in turn would relay to their parents what Mr. Woodbury deemed "they needed to know." He made it clear to the girls that their parents didn't need to know "everything" that he was saying to them or about them. For me, as a parent, when adult tells a child that they don't need to be telling their parents everything that goes on, it is of concern to me. It wasn't long before

some of the topics of discussion between the players on his team and this coach I did not deem to be appropriate, things like what they did/do with their boyfriends, if they even had boyfriends, what their sexual habits might be, and he only asked those whom he "assumed" might be sexually active. He would ask if they went to a dance/prom if they "got lucky" and he inquired about one of his players sexual orientation on more than one occasion. If you were a player who had a boyfriend you were considered a "sperm bank" but if you didn't have a boyfriend, you were referred to as a "dirty dyke". He also led a conversation about masturbation while he had all of his player's attention on the team bus without parents in between games at a tournament. Some of the talks were around things that kids might talk about amongst themselves in a school/peer setting but Mr. Woodbury would jump right in on any conversations that the girls might have between themselves and he would promote more talk on the subject whether it was inappropriate or not, it didn't matter. In other words, he put himself in the middle of situations that didn't involve him or anything to do regarding basketball. One example would be of slang names or phrases regarding sexual activities including the size of male genitalia or having oral sex. This parent feels that Mr. Woodbury should have never involved himself along with the girls in these types of topics of conversation. Other "red flag" occurrences were, to name a few...watching movies with the girls in a hotel room with no other adult supervision, dressed only in his gym shorts. He would also lay on the bed with the girls and I found him under the covers at one point on a trip that I was present on, and I told him that if he was cold he should put more clothing on,

but that didn't seem to phase him, and he didn't take the hint as you couldn't really tell Woody anything. Now, I would like to say that I don't honestly feel that Mr. Woodbury's intentions were anything other than to include himself in with the girls to "hang out" but he just didn't get the idea that either of these two things were inappropriate because that was not his intention in his own mind to be inappropriate but to just enjoy being in the company of the girls. But these things are just not what coaches do with their players, no matter their intentions are. I was present except for one occasion where only one of my daughter's went on a trip, otherwise there was no way that I felt comfortable enough to send my girls on their own on any of these ill supervised trips. He also often would grab, hit, whack at, pat or just pull on the girls when he would substitute them in games...at times he would smack them on the bottom, something else I did not deem to be appropriate but yet since he feels that his intentions were honorable that it was okay. As he became more familiar with each player he became more outspoken with them. In another incident while practicing at Howard's Sports Center in Saco, Mr. Woodbury grabbed my daughter and playfully bit her on the face while she was standing at the water fountain. Other team members were around but what Mr. Woodbury didn't realize was that a parent who was walking by at that moment in time mistook Mr. Woodbury's playful act as a "passionate kiss" and the rumors flew and by the weekend when we played a tournament there everyone was talking about Coach Woodbury kissing my daughter...we were approached by another parent and told what they had heard from the parent who had observed it. I asked my daughter about it and she said that Coach was just playing around and that he always bites them on the face, neck, and forehead. This was the first time I had heard of such a thing as he never did this in front of parents. After the rumors were curtailed he didn't learn from it, he also bit two other players on two separate occasions during "horseplay". In a conversation with my daughter around other members of the team, he referred to her as a "sperm bank" and when he was told that this was not acceptable behavior not only by me but by another parent, he said he didn't mean anything by it and that he would apologize to my daughter and not do it again...an apology was never made and two weeks hadn't gone by before he once again called her a "sperm bank" in another conversation. She was not the only one, he referred to another team member as being a "sperm bank" when a discussion ensued about her boyfriend and Mr. Woodbury labeled him a "Guido". The young lady told Mr. Woodbury to shut up, and he replied with "you shut up sperm bank". The team bus went silent, Mr. Woodbury's wife nudged him from the front passenger seat and reminded him that he wasn't supposed to use that phrase. He made many racial remarks including those made towards a player we had on the team who was black. She is no longer with the team, she walked away before we did although it was not for that reason.

Mr. Woodbury has a very foul mouth and doesn't hesitate to express his opinions with it. He would belittle and demean the girls both on and off the court. Some of these things I would hear myself, while other phrases were said to the kids when parents were not around. Some of the phrases and words he utilized are as follows: bitch, lazy piece of shit, water bitch, sperm bank, choade, pussy, lazy ass, fat ass, stupid ass, stupid fuck, dirty dyke, Guido, and "I feel a hate crime coming on" are some of the verbiage that Mr. Woodbury would use. He would walk back and forth on the sidelines and scream at the girls at times, one time he had to sub a player due to foul trouble and the player he put in for her wasn't playing as well as they could have been and Mr. Woodbury walked up and down the sideline screaming "I HAVE to play you, I HAVE to play you" I am certain that this did not make this player feel very good about herself. Another time he told players that they didn't have HEART to play the game, that they were not dedicated or worked hard enough. He gave players that played other sports a hard time because they didn't dedicate their time solely to basketball. Three of our players played on Varsity Softball teams for their high schools and he would give them a hard time about it using it against them and for playing time. The last two tournaments that my girls did were the straw that broke the camel's back to coin a phrase. He was demeaning to one of my girls because she played softball and gave her a hard time that weekend making smart comments and remarks, which were upsetting to another player on the team who also played softball. The last weekend we played, a parent had shared with me that Mr. Woodbury's goal for the weekend was to force my daughter to WANT to turn in her uniform because she stood up to Mr. Woodbury at a practice before the weekend and told him that her softball coach didn't want her to practice because she had a big game the next day and she couldn't be lame and sore as she is the starting pitcher. She was already sore from a basketball practice the evening before which included 12-14 "suicides" because supposedly they were not in shape according to the way they played the weekend before...I viewed this more as a punishment than a regimen to help the girls become more physically fit. You can't just run the entire practice plus 12-14 "suicide sprints" and be in shape for the next weekend tournament, as a former coach, this was absurd. My daughter was totally crushed knowing about Mr. Woodbury's "goal for the weekend" and broke down and cried and that is when I promised her that I would no longer allow him to hurt her in that way ever again. We finished the weekend and resigned from the team at the weekend's conclusion in a dignified manner. The other major incident that sticks out in my mind and upset me the most was when he called a young lady on the team a "dumb cunt". That situation occurred when he was off alone with her and they were playing basketball and he wanted her to play another kid in the gym a game of one on one...the young lady didn't feel up to it but Woody coerced her to play and

then made a monetary bet with the other player that “his player” could beat them, well Woody’s player lost the game and he lost his money and went ballistic on her calling her names and telling her how good for nothing she was and that she was a cunt. He would play mind games with the girls when it came to substituting them for each other and “threaten” them so to speak if they didn’t make his basketball team their top priority, regardless of any other activities, or sports that they might be involved in. If a player played another sport such as Softball during the AAU schedule he would belittle and ride them about it and try to get them to skip practices or leave practices early to be at his practices. If you were a member of the band, he would tease you about that as well. He would tell the players that he “held the key” to their success and that he could either promote them or not to college coaches. For some parents and players I think this was his biggest tool. He used the idea of getting college scholarships to keep people in line. The verbal abuse was bad enough, but he would also get outraged and throw things, such as bottles of water, balls, travel bags cell phones and he even pulled a players hair when he was angry with her for not following his orders while on a trip during leisure time, and nothing to do with basketball. I was witness to two separate incidents where he threw his wife’s book bag with papers that she had to correct for her math class all over the gym and then he made her get down and pick them all up. He also referred to his wife in a manner that was not acceptable to many. He once said to a player that his “fat, ugly, stupid wife could do something better than the player could” and his wife’s response was...well, I’m not ugly! He also took a players travel bag and emptied it out and threw all of her belongings all over her room because she couldn’t find a hair brush and wasn’t ready in time to leave when Mr. Woodbury wanted to leave the hotel for a non-team outing. He has made many of his players cry on many occasions and I have seen firsthand his ability to take a confident young athlete and destroy their belief in themselves. Each and every player on his team has stories to tell about Mr. Woodbury, he left no player free to fully enjoy the AAU experience. He would also be disrespectful and demean and undermine some player’s parents...one example would be on the weekend that we walked away from this team he told one player while one of my daughters and she were sitting on the bench that “her mother was no better than the other parents and that she was a two faced bitch” which upset this player as it did my daughter to hear him be disrespectful like that. What kind of person does and says these things to young people??? Mr. Woodbury has to be stopped. Am I a disgruntled parent looking to get even for something...NO, I am a concerned Mother who after 6 months of an abundance of situations that are just plain wrong decided to pull my daughter’s off of this team and away from this man. Am I the only parent? No, others have followed suit and have walked away following our departure.. Enough is just

enough. By staying on this team and playing for this coach, I felt that I was only condoning his actions even though that was not my intention and I began to realize that because the many quality players that played for him were indirectly giving him the idea that the things that he was doing were okay because we all continued to play despite these experiences. Many others before me have walked away from Mr. Woodbury and his Maine Elite Team, but they did so in silence and were just happy to get away from him. Although I will say that according to a parent who has been with the team since it's inception, Mr. Woodbury was not like this the first two years of coaching AAU. The behavior mentioned in this letter worsened over the course of this last year. If I can prevent this man who holds himself out as a coach, and role model for young ladies from ever demeaning, inappropriately interacting, and verbally abusing any other young lady, then my stepping forth with this information about Mr. Woodbury will be worth it. Someone please stop this man from coaching at this level, he does not belong working with young people. My goal here is a very simple one, to have Mr. Woodbury removed from his AAU coaching position and not allow him to work with young people again at this level. I can provide lists of parents and players who will validate any of the claims that I have made here and would not hesitate to do so. I would also like to add that I am not of the opinion that the AAU organization would be proud of the fact that many of us as parents who have had inquiries from colleges regarding our daughters and seeing them play at tournaments under Mr. Woodbury, would appreciate the fact that we don't feel comfortable in listing Mr. Woodbury as our AAU coach/contact regarding our children because we aren't confident that Mr. Woodbury has the BEST interests of the players at heart when communicating with these colleges, which is a shame in itself. It is my opinion that when you have a coach who manipulates his/her players against each other to send a message to the parents that it is indeed the coach who has the control and controls who plays and who doesn't for whatever reason(s), versus playing and teaching the game of basketball the way it was meant to be utilizing players based on their abilities, strengths and weaknesses, and when you don't have the best interest of your players at heart, it is time to move on and that time is now for Mr. Woodbury.

I realize that this was a bit of reading, but if you are involved with working with youth in any way, you will take the time to read and absorb it, and if it is in your capacity to act upon it, you will do so knowing that you are doing the right thing for many young people who might come in contact with Mr. Woodbury in the future. I thank you for your time and appreciate any efforts you put forth regarding this situation.

Sincerely,
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